

VZCZCXRO3956
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHRH #0061/01 0101350
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 101350Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9795
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 9970
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0024

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 000061

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (HARRIS) AND NEA/IPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/10/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: SAUDI VIEWS ON IRAN

REF: A. A) STATE 13000
 1B. B) MANAMA 835
 1C. C) RIYADH 15
 1D. D) RIYADH 14

Classified By: DCM David Rundell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Key Points:

-- The KSA and other GCC members insist on being consulted before any proposals are made to the Iranians.
-- Iran,s enrichment program is an unacceptable threat to the Kingdom.
-- Pursuing further sanctions is a waste of time, because the Iranians are stalling to create facts on the ground.
-- Concerned countries must break Iranian ranks by appealing to moderates.

Comment

-- The Saudi Government fears that Iran, Hezbollah, Syria, and Hamas will exploit events in Gaza just as they did in Lebanon in 2006 to extol armed resistance and discredit moderate Arab diplomacy.
-- The Saudi Government seems to feel that Bahrain and the UAE pay only lip service to the Iranian threat while major powers like the U.S., EU, and Russia do not treat KSA as a serious interlocutor on Iran.

End Key Points and Comment.

1. (C) On January 4, the DCM, British Charge Andrew Turner, and German Counselor Stephan Schneck delivered Ref A points to Saudi Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for International Organizations, Prince Turki Saud Al Kabir. Representatives from the French and Italian Embassies were scheduled to participate but did not come, and the Prince seemed disappointed at their absence. Clearly anticipating the opportunity afforded by the multilateral delegation, Prince Turki, after listening patiently to Ref A points, delivered a long exposition of Saudi views on Iran, during which he occasionally slapped the table for emphasis, repeatedly called Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad "crazy," and scorned Iranian practices such as temporary marriages ("nikah al-mut,a") and dissimulation under duress ("taqiyya").

2. (C) Iran was the subject of long discussions at the 29th annual summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in

Muscat, the Prince said. All agreed that Iran should not have nuclear facilities to produce nuclear weapons, but opinions diverged on how to achieve this, with some suggesting making positive gestures to Iran. The Saudi Government, however, cited unprecedented Iranian interference in Arab affairs (Yemen, Egypt, Gaza, Lebanon, and Shia minorities in the Gulf), and argued forcibly against such gestures. Some at the summit bruited the notion of removing foreign forces from the Gulf, but the KSA said having Iran fill the resulting vacuum was unacceptable. Apparently referring to the Bahrain-Iranian Security Agreement of December 25, Prince Turki doubted whether Iran would honor its promise not to interfere in Bahrain affairs. He expressed exasperation that the U.A.E. could maintain good relations with Iran while the latter still occupies Abu Musa island.

¶3. (C) Prince Turki singled out European Union proposals to Iran for censure.

At Muscat, GCC members expressed anger about not being consulted before the proposals were made to Iran. Striking the table for emphasis, the Prince said henceforth GCC members must be consulted and that the Kingdom would never accept any agreement that threatens its security. "If you don't treat us seriously, neither will the Iranians."

¶4. (C) The KSA acknowledges Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear program, but believes that the enrichment program is a clear sign that Iran wants a weapons program. "Iranian enrichment is a serious threat." The Kingdom attaches no credence to Iran's economic rationale for enrichment. It's an open question, however, what Iran hopes to achieve with

RIYADH 00000061 002 OF 002

nuclear weapons. "What should the Kingdom do if Iran acquires such weapons," the Prince asked rhetorically, "Invite others to station nuclear weapons in Saudi Arabia?"

¶5. (C) Prince Turki said, "Time is not on our side." Pursuing further sanctions plays into the hands of Iranian negotiators who are stalling and allows Iran to create new facts on the ground. He alluded to a letter that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sent to Arab League Secretary General Abu Mussa in mid-December that proposed a fourth round of sanctions without, however, stopping enrichment. While rejecting the use of armed force, the Prince said concerned countries, including the EU, Russia, and China, should try to split Iranian ranks by appealing to moderates within Iran.

¶6. (C) Iranian/Saudi relations are particularly cool at the moment, the Prince said. When the Iranian ambassador came to the MFA recently to complain about an anti-Iranian article in the Saudi press, the Prince greeted him with six anti-Saudi articles in the Iranian press. The Prince told the ambassador that the Kingdom would publish two anti-Iranian articles for each anti-Saudi one until Iran desists.
FRAKER